

## Tzu Chi Major Aid Shipment to Reach Haiti, to be Distributed Soon

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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The first major aid shipment of the Tzu Chi Foundation to the survivors of the Haitian earthquake arrived in the Dominican Republic on Wednesday and will reach Port-au-Prince in the next few days. It is preparing two other shipments, from the U.S. and Taiwan, and is also considering a Relief work program for victims of the devastating earthquake.

A plane carrying 864 containers of relief goods left Taiwan on the morning of January 25 and reached the Dominican Republic on January 27, from where the goods will be taken by road to Haiti. The shipment contains instant rice and corn powder – both can be turned into food by adding hot or cold water – recyclable bowls and recyclable soup spoons. The journey to Port-au-Prince by road will take about eight hours. Since security is a major concern, Mr. Chang, Taiwan's representative of diplomat in the Dominican Republic has been in contact with the Haitian police on the border to ask for protection of the shipment all the way to the capital. In addition, the Jordanian contingent of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Haiti has promised to provide security during the distribution of the goods in the capital.

Tzu Chi volunteers on the ground has been considering the best place to distribute the goods. They have chosen as the first point an orphanage, IHCD in the Tabarre district, where more than 2,000 people need help. Before the earthquake, the institution had 250 orphans, who received education and two meals a day. In the disaster, the building collapsed and the children have been given to host families to look after. The volunteers have given their corn powder to members of neighborhood committees to sample. They have judged it very suitable for the taste of Haitians; so it will be included in the distribution. The foundation developed the food, bearing in mind that corn is the staple food of Haitians. It has decided that a Relief work program is very feasible, as a way to involve local people in the clearing and reconstruction work; it has successfully used this model in other disaster situations.

The volunteers discovered night temperatures in Haiti are very cold and that most people are sleeping in the open air. They found that plastic sheets they gave to the Guatemala Elementary School in Port-au-Prince last year were still being used, to protect residents from the wind, rain and the sun.

Volunteer Ge Ji-she said that he was excited to see how their aid was being used. "You can see how they are making use of the materials we distributed last time, so you can imagine how much they lack resources. Of course, we will do what we can, to bring in more canvas." He was visiting a temporary shelter in the capital, where more than 100 families are living under tents. "They came to this park by themselves," he said. "The government basically is not giving them any help. They are living here with their families and everything is here – food, clothing and accommodation."

So the foundation's U.S. chapter has decided to send as soon as possible by air and sea 12,000 blankets made of recycled material, 10,000 plastic sheets and 3,000 medical kits, for distribution to the survivors. In addition, the foundation will send from Taiwan a further 10

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tonnes of relief materials, including corn flower, risotto rice and blankets; they will be taken by air to Miami, then the Dominican Republic and from there to Haiti.

An American NGO in Haiti asked the foundation to provide blankets, food and medical supplies because it had run out. At a video conference on Tuesday morning, Taiwan time, Master Cheng Yen gave her approval for the volunteers to provide these supplies; they will help the 188 staff of the NGO to continue their work.